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Nail Salon Safety Guide

A manicure or pedicure should be a wonderful, relaxing experience for everyone to indulge in. Since there are sequential consumers contacting the warm, moist environment of a manicure or pedicure service, we would appreciate your assistance in keeping sanitation practices diligent and infection control practices followed. We want to keep Nevada safe from bacterial skin infection outbreaks that have harmed hundreds of customers of nail salons in other states. We are thankful that Nevada has avoided these outbreaks. We want to keep it that way, but we need your help. We have an active public education campaign that highlights nail salon safety, health, and infection control. For detailed information on all aspects of cosmetology and salon safety you should visit our website www.cosmetology.nv.gov.

Nail Technology is one of six individual branches of cosmetology licensed and regulated in Nevada. The other five are Aesthetics, Electrology, Demonstrators of Cosmetics, Hair Braiding, and Hair Design. We also license Cosmetologists, who are authorized to practice all branches of cosmetology (except electrology).

Nail Technologists are licensed practitioners who may provide the following services in a licensed salon:

- a. Care a of consumer's fingernails or toenails
- b. Beautification of a consumer's nails
- c. Massage of a consumer's hands, forearms, feet, or lower legs

Look for Licenses

Salons are required to post a facility license in plain view of the public. Nail technologists are required to display their licenses in plain view of the public at the position where the nail technologist performs his or her work. These licenses must be posted in public view and cannot be photocopies. The license issued by the Nevada State Board of Cosmetology has the name and recent photo of the licensee printed on the license.

Unlicensed salons and unlicensed nail technologists servicing nails on the public are illegal and prohibited by Nevada Law.

Disinfect or Dispose

After washing with soap, nail technicians are required to take the following steps between each customer:

- Clean and disinfect tools approved for reuse, or
- Dispose of tools not approved for reuse

It is prohibited for salons to keep a customer's nail files, buffer blocks, cuticle sticks, sanding drums, sanding wheels, bands, or any other tool.

Safety in the nail salon

Sandal season is year round in Nevada, and you may be tempted to rush to your favorite salon for a foot soak and pedicure so that your feet will look their best. But it's important to be vigilant as you sit in the pedicure chair — your health and safety may depend on it. Spas and salons are where we go to feel relaxed and pampered — stress and worry are not supposed to be part of the picture, especially when the concern is infection, which is exactly what can happen if these facilities don't maintain sanitary conditions as required by health and safety regulations. Lurking in the depths of that foot spa may be bacteria, fungal strains, and even far more dangerous microorganisms that typically thrive in warm, moist environments. The screens and tubes of foot spas are particularly good places for bacteria to collect and grow, often forming dense layers of cells and proteins called biofilms, which can be very hard to remove. If open sores or skin wounds are present (including insect bites, scratches, scabbed-over wounds, or any condition that weakens the skin barrier) this gives the germs a pathway into the body.

In October 2000, California health officials received complaints about a large outbreak of skin boils from customers who soaked their feet in foot spas as part of their pedicure services. It was determined that the boils were caused by contaminated whirlpool foot spas that had not been properly cleaned in a California nail salon. Officials with the Centers for Disease Control swabbed 30 footbaths in 18 nail salons from five California counties and found mycobacterium in 29 of the 30 samples, according to a CDC abstract published in 2005.

At particular risk are those with diabetes. According to WebMD, if you're diabetic you need to take extra precautions when getting foot treatments. Any break in the skin (including ones caused by callous removal or aggressive cuticle cutting) can let in bacteria, leading to infection.

The Nevada State Board of Cosmetology, which licenses nail technicians and nail salons and enforces the State laws covering the beauty industry, has found that the most common violations found in nail salons include:

- Not posting safety rules conspicuously.
- Not totally immersing tools in disinfectant registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with demonstrated bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal activity.
- Not disinfecting all non-electrical instruments.
- Not covering disinfectant solution nor changing it often enough.
- Not placing used instruments in properly labeled containers.
- Not storing cleaned instruments in properly labeled containers.

Pedicure Pointers

Here are some tips from the Board to help insure you have a satisfying and safe pedicure experience:

- Do a visual check of the salon: Look at the general cleanliness of the salon. Floors, walls, counters, and chairs should be clean and in good condition. Are towels scattered around the salon? Soiled towels must be stored in a labeled container and not used until properly laundered and sanitized. Clean towels need to be stored in a closed, clean cabinet. Is there an accumulation of waste? Avoid any salon that is visibly dirty.
- Disease and infection: If you have some sort of infectious disease, stay home. Salons are prohibited from knowingly serving clients with infectious or communicable conditions. If you're healthy, help stay that way by not shaving your legs at least 24 hours before a service. Also, don't get a pedicure if you have bug bites, scratches, or cuts. These steps will help prevent any possible infection.
- Foot spas: Any foot basin that holds water needs to be cleaned with liquid soap and water, and then disinfected with an EPA-registered hospital-liquid disinfectant between customers, at the end of each day, and at the end of each week according to the instructions shown on the salon's Health and Safety poster (be sure your salon has one posted on the premises, as required by the Board). Keep in mind that proper disinfection takes time. For example, in the case of whirlpool foot spas and air jet basins, the foot spa is washed and the disinfectant is used to sanitize the foot spa between patrons. Some new foot spas have disposable liners that are thrown away after each use. If the salon is not doing this between customers, take your business elsewhere.
- Illegal tools: No razor-edged tool or other device can be used to remove calluses. Callus removal should not be performed by a nail technician, but rather a qualified medical professional. Salon technicians, while skilled and trained in cutting, trimming, polishing, coloring, tinting, cleansing, or manicuring nails, may never perform any act that affects the structure or function of living tissue of the face or body. Other tools that cannot be disinfected such as buffers, cotton pads, and emery boards must be thrown out immediately after a single use — make sure that if these tools are used on you that they are new and haven't been used before. If you have any doubt, don't be bashful about asking the nail technician.
- Cleaning and storage: Tools that can be disinfected, such as nail clippers and metal cuticle pushers, must be cleaned with soap or detergent and water and then completely immersed in an EPA-registered disinfectant. Containers need to be large enough so that all non-electrical items being disinfected can be thoroughly and completely immersed in disinfectant. The disinfectant solution must remain covered at all times and be changed at least once a week or whenever it is visibly cloudy or dirty. Tools that have been used on a client or soiled in any manner must be stored in a container clearly marked as "soiled" or "dirty." Disinfected tools must be stored in a clean, covered place and labeled "clean."
- Don't shave your legs 24 hours or less before a pedicure to avoid creating microscopic cuts that increase the risk of infection
- Avoid receiving a pedicure if you have any open cuts or sores on skin where services will be performed
- Observe the foot spa before receiving a pedicure. Has it been properly cleaned and disinfected? Ask if you are not sure.

- Be particularly observant of the screen in the circulating foot spas. Screens **MUST** be cleaned and sanitized after each customer.
- Finally, consider bringing your own tools – at least you’ll know where they’ve been and how they’ve been handled.

Fish pedicures are illegal

A fish pedicure is a procedure in which a consumer places his or her feet in a foot bath or tub that contains live fish. The fish then eat dead skin cells off the consumer’s feet.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says that infections have been reported in the United Kingdom by people who have had a fish pedicure. The CDC also says that little is known about the types of bacteria and other potential pathogens that might be carried by these fish and the potential risks that they might pose to customers. The procedure has now been banned not only in Nevada, but in other states and Canadian provinces as well because of sanitary concerns.

The Nevada State Board of Cosmetology has determined that fish pedicures are not permitted in Nevada under the Board’s health and safety regulations. This is primarily because the Nevada Administrative Code requires that before use on a patron, “all hair and other adherent foreign material must be removed from the instrument, implement or other tool; and the instrument, implement or other tool must be: thoroughly washed with soap and hot water; rinsed in clear hot water; and placed in a covered wet sanitizer which is large enough for complete immersion of the instrument, implement or other tool, and which contains an infection control solution that is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency and approved by the Board. During each service, all instruments, implements and other tools must be kept free of contamination by immersion in an infection control solution approved by the Board. All disinfected instruments, implements and other tools that are not in use and not in the process of wet disinfection in a wet sanitizer must be stored in a clean, dry sanitizer. A dry sanitizer consists of a clean, closed container, drawer or storage unit with a fumigant that contains only disinfected instruments, implements and other tools.” The Board has also concluded that the use of live fish does not allow foot basins or tubs to be adequately cleaned and disinfected as required by law.